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The Essential  
Tool Kit  
for Making Your  
Home Landscape  
Water  
Efficient

# Tips for Making Your Home Landscape Water Efficient



**Gardening Books:** Read good gardening guides such as *Sunset Western Gardening Book* and *Sunset Western Landscaping Book* for advice on selecting the right plants for your landscape. Take them with you when shopping to help choose the right plants according to climate, water needs and sun exposure.



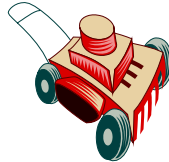
**Pressure Gauge:** When building a new sprinkler system, use this inexpensive tool to check operating water pressure at an outdoor faucet. Make sure you have adequate pressure to run the system. If there is inadequate pressure, reduce the number of sprinkler heads per circuit by adding more valves and zones and run the zones one at a time. Sprinkler heads come labeled with how far they spray at different pressures. Choose sprinkler heads that will spray the correct distance for the existing pressure. Pressure that is too high will result in water wasting mist; too little pressure will result in dry spots and uneven coverage.



**Mulch, Compost and Balanced Fertilizers:** These will help plants stay healthy and save water. Compost and mulch are available in bags or truckloads, or better yet, make your own compost. Use fertilizer with balanced nutrients such as 10-10-10 or 12-8-6. Mixtures such as 28-10-6 have high nitrogen content and may burn your plants. High nitrogen fertilizers also make plants grow faster. Plants that grow too fast require more water and a lot more maintenance.



**Sprinkler Timer Manual:** Read the manual to learn about its features and how to adjust it with the seasons. If you cannot find it, download one off the web.



**Mower:** Use a lawn mower with a mulching blade and grasscycle the clippings. If the clippings are too long to leave on the lawn, compost them.



**Screwdrivers:** Use small ones to adjust sprinklers and large ones to determine moisture depth in the soil. Push a large screwdriver into the soil. When it becomes difficult, that is about the level where the soil is dry.



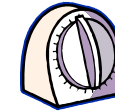
**Computer:** Use the Internet to visit the Department of Water Resources, Office of Water Use Efficiency website at: [www.owue.water.ca.gov](http://www.owue.water.ca.gov). On this site you will find information about conservation programs, publications and links to other informational sites. Your local water supplier may also have a website.



**Calendar:** Make notes to turn down the sprinkler timer as the summer turns to fall; mark routine maintenance needs and schedule time to test the sprinkler system for problems.



**Broom:** Use brooms to sweep instead of rinsing pavement.



**Timer:** Use a timer as a reminder to turn off the water when using a hose-end sprinkler. A kitchen timer works well; there are also battery or wind-up timers that go right on the faucet and garden hose.



**Tuna Cans and Clock:** To find out how long to run your sprinkler system, place several cans or straight sided containers of *equal size* in a grid pattern between sprinklers on the lawn. Run sprinklers for 15 minutes. With a ruler, measure the depth of water in each of the cans. Add up the depths and divide the total by the number of cans. This is the average depth. Multiply the average by four to get the precipitation rate in *inches of water per hour* from the sprinklers. Your local water agency should be able to tell you how many inches of water are required per day for your lawn through the season. Once you know how much water is being put out by your system your water agency should be able to help you determine a schedule to water your lawn in your area. For additional information on how to do a home sprinkler water audit lookup the Office of Water Use Efficiency web site at: [www.owue.water.ca.gov/landscape](http://www.owue.water.ca.gov/landscape).



**Telephone:** Call your local water agency to see what kinds of conservation services they offer. Report any broken pipes.